

**Articles and Sermons :: Do you indeed ACT as you pray?---James---**

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(John Angell James, "Prayer and Practice")

I need not prove to you that prayer, as a duty, is essential to Christian conduct; and, as a privilege, is equally indispensable to Christian enjoyment. All Christians give themselves to this devout exercise. Their petitions are copious, comprehensive, and seemingly earnest.

What solemn professions they make to God!

What ardent desires they express!

What numerous blessings they seek!

What strong resolutions they form!

If we so pray--how ought we to live? What kind of people must we be--to live up to the standard of our prayers? And ought we not, in some measure at least, to reach this standard? Should there not be a harmony, a consistency, a proportion--between our practice and our prayers?

Do you indeed ACT as you pray? Do you understand the import, and feel the obligation of your own petitions? Do you rise from your knees where you have asked and knocked--to seek? Do you really want, wish for, and endeavor to obtain an answer to your prayers? Are you really intent upon doing, and being--what you ask for in prayer?

Our prayers are to act upon ourselves; they have, or ought to have, great power in the formation of character and the regulation of conduct. It is plain, therefore, that much of prayer is mere words. We either do not understand, or do not consider, or do not mean--what we say.

Do we go from praying--to acting, and to live for salvation, for heaven, for eternity?

How common is it for professors to pray for victory over the world; to be delivered from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to be enabled to set their affections on things above, and not on things of the earth; and to be dead to seen and temporal things. And yet all the while they are as obviously eager to amass wealth, to multiply the attractions of earth, and to enjoy as much luxurious

gratification as possible!

'Spirituality of mind' is the subject of innumerable prayers from some who never take a step to promote it! But, on the contrary, who are doing all they can to make themselves carnally minded! How many repeat that petition, "Lead us not into temptation," who, instead of most carefully keeping at the utmost possible distance from all inducements to sin, place themselves in the very path of sin!

How often do we pray to have the mind of Christ, and to imitate the example of Jesus. But where is the assiduous endeavor, the laboring effort, to copy this high model, in . . .
its self-denying condescension,
its profound humility,
its beautiful meekness,
its indifference to worldly comforts,
its forgiving mercy,
its devotedness to God?

How often do we pray to be delivered from evil tempers and irascible feelings. And yet we indulge them on every slight provocation, and take no pains to subdue them!

It is unnecessary to multiply the illustrations of the inconsistency between our prayers and our practice.